

Film ban strange, says Said Zahari
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Ex-political detainee Said Zahari is surprised by the Singapore government's decision to ban a documentary film entitled Zahari's 17 years directed by Martyn See.

Said, who is the former editor-in-chief of Utusan Melayu, said the main reason could be that Singapore does not want its younger generation to know the political history of the state during the 50s and 60s.

"The (Singapore) government is afraid that more and more people will know about the nation's history," he added when contacted today.

However, Said, who was detained for 17 years, also said the move to ban the film was surprising because it has been around for the past one year.

He said the film has been distributed in many countries and it is strange why the Singapore government decided to ban it now.
Among others, the film has been screened in Malaysia and Canada.

"I have not seen the (Singapore) government's statement but I don't understand why they want to ban it only now?" he asked.

According to Said, what he had revealed during the 50-minute film was just a minor portion of what he had written in his book Dark Clouds at Daw published in Malaysia in 2001.

Security threat

A Reuters report yesterday stated that Singapore's Ministry of Information, Communications and Arts had banned the film because it went against public interest.

"The film gives a distorted and misleading portrayal of Said's arrest and detention under the Internal Security Act (of Singapore)," said the ministry.

It claimed that the film was an attempt by Said "to exculpate himself from his past involvement in communist united front activities against the interests of Singapore."

The ministry said the film had to be banned because it posed a security threat as it sought to undermine public confidence in the government.

The film's director has been asked to turn over all copies of the film by Singapore's Media Development Authority.

Previously, See was investigated by the Singapore police after he produced a documentary about opposition leader Chee Soon Juan in 2005.

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